



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Ag producers can access commission merchants, dealer info on WSDA Web site

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) has launched a new Web page with information that helps producers, buyers and sellers of agricultural products avoid unfair business practices and fraud. The Web page lists licensed dealers, brokers, commission merchants and cash buyers that do business in a wide range of agricultural commodities and includes forms that producers and licensees may need. The site is at www.wa.gov/agr/Inspection/CommissionMerchants/default.htm.

Investigators from the department's Commission Merchants Program last year handled 74 complaints of disputed bills, recovering \$1.75 million for producers. They enforce state laws that regulate those who purchase agricultural products from producers, or market products on a consignment basis. Dealers, commission merchants, cash buyers and agents are required to be licensed annually with WSDA, and in some cases bonded.

"Producers need to know who they are doing business with," said Jerry Buendel, program manager for the Commission Merchants Program. "Recent experiences with claims have shown that growers recover as little as three cents on the dollar. We know some farmers are operating on the edge and the last thing they need is for someone to harm them through unscrupulous business practices."

The program, which is funded through license fees and other charges, has offices in Yakima, Moses Lake and Olympia.

"We enforce the Commission Merchants Act by taking complaints and tips from producers and businesses, by conducting inspections at weigh stations, and by patrolling roadways," said Bob Radke, investigations supervisor.

To contact program staff, send an e-mail to commerch@agr.wa.gov, call (509) 225-2616 or (360) 902-1854.

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